Claims

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of operating a self-service checkout terminal comprising the steps of:

initiating a checkout transaction at the self-service checkout terminal;

obtaining weight of a produce item via a scale of the self-service checkout terminal; and

acquiring a digital picture of the produce item via a component video camera of the self-service checkout terminal when the weight of the produce item is obtained.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

forwarding the acquired digital picture of the produce item to a monitoring station; and

displaying the acquired digital picture of the produce item at the monitoring station.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

permitting one of approval and disapproval of the checkout transaction by the monitoring station based on the obtained weight and the acquired digital picture of the produce item.

4. The method of claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

storing the acquired digital picture of the produce item; and

associating the stored digital picture of the produce item with the checkout transaction.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of acquiring a digital picture of the produce item via a component video camera includes acquiring a digital picture of the produce item via a component video camera comprising a web camera.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of acquiring a digital picture of the produce item via a component video camera includes acquiring a high-resolution digital picture of the produce item via a web camera.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of obtaining weight of the produce item via a scale of the self-service checkout terminal includes the step of waiting for a stable weight period of the produce item on the scale.

8. A self-service checkout terminal comprising:

a processing unit;

a component video camera in communication with said processing unit;

a produce scale in communication with said processing unit; and

memory in communication with said processing unit and containing program instructions which, when executed by said processing unit, causes said processing unit to (i) initiate a checkout transaction at the self-service checkout terminal, (ii) obtain weight of a produce item via a produce scale of the self-service checkout terminal, and (iii) acquire a digital picture of the produce item when the weight of the produce item is obtained.

9. The self-service checkout terminal of claim 8, wherein said component video camera comprises a web camera.

10. The self-service checkout terminal of claim 9, wherein said web camera is operative to obtain a high-resolution digital picture of said produce item.

11. The self-service checkout terminal of claim 8, wherein said memory has further program instructions which, when executed by said processing unit causes said processing unit to (iv) forward the acquired digital picture of the produce item to a monitoring station, and (v) display the acquired digital picture of the produce item at the monitoring station.

12. The self-service checkout terminal of claim 11, wherein said memory has further program instructions which, when executed by said processing unit causes said processing unit to (vi) permit one of approval and disapproval of the checkout transaction by the monitoring station based on the obtained weight and the acquired digital picture of the produce item.

13. The self-service checkout terminal of claim 8, wherein said memory has further program instructions which, when executed by said processing unit causes said processing unit to (iv) store the acquired digital picture of the produce item, and (v) associate the stored digital picture of the produce item with the checkout transaction.

14. The self-service checkout terminal of claim 8, wherein obtaining weight of the produce item via said scale of the self-service checkout terminal includes waiting for a stable weight period of the produce item on said scale.

15. A self-service checkout system comprising:

a self-service checkout terminal;

a monitoring station; and

a network providing communication between said self-service checkout terminal and said monitoring station;

said self-service checkout terminal comprising:

a first processing unit;

a component video camera in communication with said processing unit;

a produce scale in communication with said processing unit; and

first memory in communication with said processing unit and containing program instructions which, when executed by said processing unit, causes said processing unit to (i) initiate a checkout transaction at the self-service checkout terminal, (ii) obtain weight of a produce item via a produce scale of the self-service checkout terminal, (iii) acquire a digital picture of the produce item when the weight of the produce item is obtained, and (iv) transmit the acquired digital picture of the produce item to said monitoring station via said network;

said monitoring station comprising:

a second processing unit;

a display in communication with said processing unit; and

second memory in communication with said processing unit and containing program instructions which, when executed by said processing unit, causes said processing unit to (i) receive the digital picture of the produce item from the self-service checkout terminal via the network; and (ii) display the digital picture of the produce item on the display.

16. The self-service checkout system of claim 15, wherein said second memory has further program instructions which, when executed by said second processing unit causes said second processing unit to (iii) permit one of approval and disapproval of the checkout transaction by the monitoring station based on the obtained weight and the acquired digital picture of the produce item.

17. The self-service checkout system of claim 15, wherein said second memory has further program instructions which, when executed by said second processing unit causes said second processing unit to (iii) store the acquired digital picture of the produce item, and (iv) associate the stored digital picture of the produce item with the checkout transaction.

18. The self-service checkout system of claim 15, wherein said component video camera comprises a web camera.

19. The self-service checkout system of claim 18, wherein said web camera is operative to obtain a high-resolution digital picture of the produce item.

20. The self-service checkout system of claim 15, wherein obtaining weight of the produce item via said scale of the self-service checkout terminal includes waiting for a stable weight period of the produce item on said scale.